

**A Census Study of Student Anxieties Related to  
the Quarter-to-Semester Conversion in the  
Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership**

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## **Abstract**

### *A Census Study of Student Anxieties Related to the Quarter-to-Semester Conversion in the Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership*

To support the University System of Ohio Board of Regents' Strategic Plan for Higher Education, The Ohio State University is converting to a semester-based academic calendar. Given that over 50,000 undergraduate students on five campuses will convert academic courses, students have become anxious about completing degrees. In order to determine how to best help students succeed through the transition in the Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership (ACEL) in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, it was important to understand these anxieties from the student perspective. The purpose of the census study was to describe student anxieties related to the quarter-to-semester conversion and to design and implement a student orientation session to provide students comfort about their successful transition from the quarter system to the semester system. The objectives guiding the study were to describe student anxieties toward the quarter-to-semester conversion, to use the results of the census study to design and implement a quarter-to-semester orientation session for ACEL students, and to answer questions and address concerns expressed by students in the census study in order to provide students a comfort level toward the quarter-to-semester transition. A census study of undergraduates in three majors and two major options in ACEL was conducted. A panel of experts established content validity of the instrument, and three undergraduate animal science majors established face validity of

the instrument. A priori, the researcher established a 10% confidence band as acceptable for reliability based on a test re-test method with a one-month interval. Twenty-eight ACEL students completed the survey. The survey results were used to show that students were most anxious about graduating on time, the new degree requirements on the semester system, and how academic credits would be converted from the quarter to the semester system. Faculty advisors addressed these concerns during an orientation session for ACEL students titled, *Q2S and U*, to provide students a level of comfort about the quarter-to-semester conversion.

## **Introduction and Need for Study**

To support the University System of Ohio Board of Regents' Strategic Plan for Higher Education, The Ohio State University is converting to a semester-based academic calendar, with the first semester classes beginning June 18, 2012. Given that over 50,000 undergraduate students on five campuses will convert academic courses, students have become anxious about completing degrees. In order to determine how to best help students in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences' Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership (ACEL) successfully navigate the quarter-to-semester transition, it was important to understand these anxieties from the student perspective.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the census study was to describe student anxieties related to the quarter-to-semester conversion and to design and implement a student orientation session to provide students comfort about their successful transition from the quarter system to the semester system.

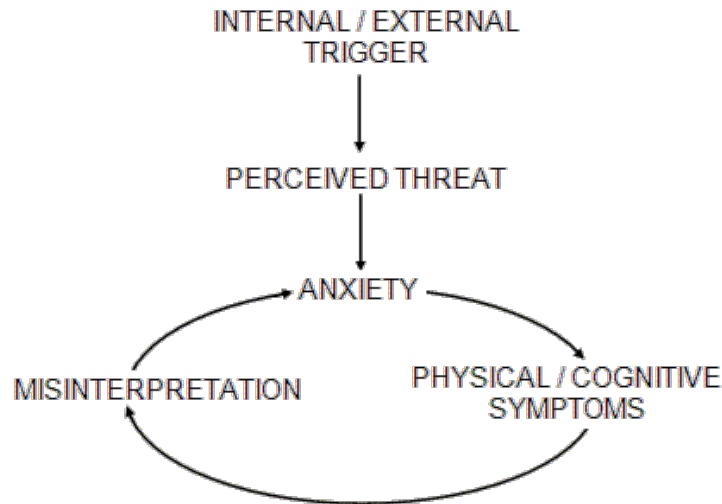
### **Objectives of the Study**

There were three objectives that guided the census study:

1. To describe student anxieties toward the quarter-to-semester conversion.
2. To use the results of the census study to design and implement a quarter-to-semester orientation session for ACEL students.
3. To answer questions and address concerns expressed by students in the census study in order to provide students a comfort level toward the quarter-to-semester transition.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Clark's Cognitive Model of Anxiety*

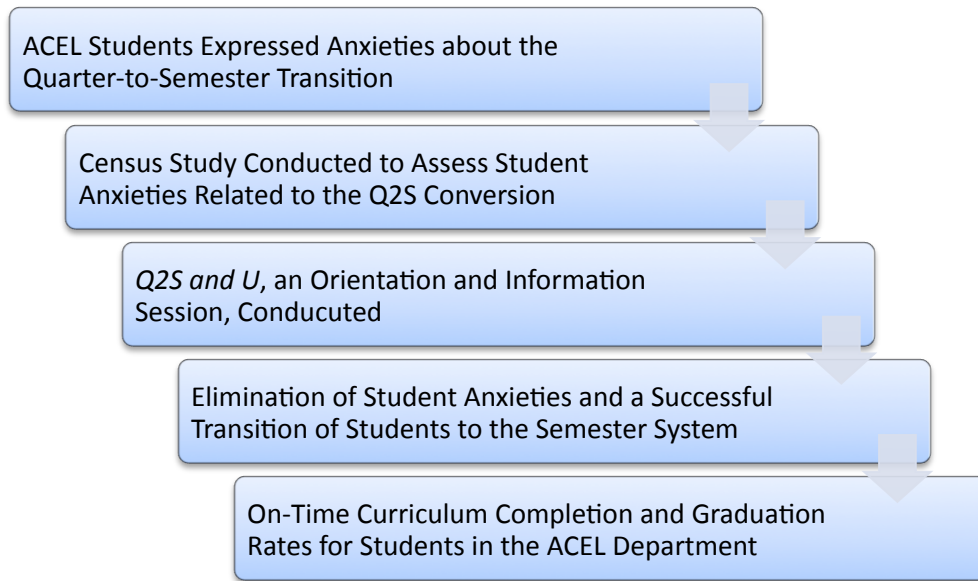


Clark's Cognitive Model of Anxiety is typically used in the academic setting to describe student panic attacks related to testing anxieties. In the case of this study, the model was adapted to describe the cycle of anxiety about the quarter-to-semester transition among students in the Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership. For ACEL students, the Ohio Board of Regents' mandate for the quarter-to-semester conversion was the external trigger for anxiety. The perceived threat of the conversion varied from student to student, however the most common perceived threat was not graduating on time. Spending an extra semester at Ohio State was the most common factor that contributed to student anxiety. While ACEL students were not experiencing physical symptoms of anxiety, some students experienced cognitive symptoms, for example, stress and worry. These symptoms coupled with students misinterpreting information and documents provided by ACEL faculty and staff fueled

the cycle of anxiety about the quarter-to-semester transition for students. The goal of this study and of the Q2S and U event was to break to the cycle of anxiety for students by eliminating misinterpretation and cognitive symptoms of anxiety. Breaking the anxiety cycle in turn provides students a level of comfort about their successful completion of curriculum and on-time graduation on the semester system



## Conceptual Framework for the Study



### **Materials and Methods - *Data Collection Procedures:***

A census study of undergraduates in three majors and two specialties in the Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership was conducted. Surveys were distributed online, via the use of SurveyMonkey.com. First year, second year, and third year students in the ACEL Department received an email containing the link to the survey. The email, which can be found in Appendix A, was sent to students outlining the purpose of the study, as well as instructions for completing the survey.

Prior to distributing the survey, a panel of experts established content validity of the instrument. Three undergraduate animal science majors established face and content validity of the instrument. A priori, the researcher established a 10% confidence band as acceptable for reliability based on a test re-test survey with a one-month interval. Three students re-tested the survey instrument.

At the conclusion of the survey window, the survey was closed and students could no longer access the link. Results were analyzed based on the frequency of common responses for each question.

## **Results and Discussion**

Complete survey findings can be found in Appendix B, however general survey findings concluded that 57% of ACEL students were concerned about completing degree requirements in four years. It was determined that 61% of ACEL students were concerned about their new degree requirements on the semester system and that 24% of ACEL students were concerned about how quarter hours will convert to semester hours.

The survey results prove that students in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences' Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership are in fact experiencing anxiety about the quarter to semester conversion. With 57% of students concerned about completing degree requirements on time, it is obvious that students are worried about the impact the transition from quarters to semesters will have on their academic endeavors. The need to stay on campus for additional time could affect students' post-graduation job search, as well having financial implications for students. It is also evident that students are concerned about changes to the curriculum as 61% of ACEL students are concerned about new degree requirements on the semester system. Most concerns were about new courses offered, particularly the new structure for student teaching and Block course schedules for AgriScience education majors.

## **Implications**

The survey validated ACEL faculty members' thoughts about the need for the *Q2S and U* event to help students resolve their concerns about the quarter-to-semester transition. The census study also validated suspicions of faculty members that students were experiencing anxiety about the quarter-to-semester transition. This initial preliminary study was instrumental in developing the curriculum to provide an effective orientation session for students in the department. The orientation session consisted of a general information session about the semester system, followed by break-out sessions by major, and finally one-on-one advising sessions with advisors. The *Q2S and U* event was successful and appreciated by students.

## Literature Cited

Clark, D. M. (1986). A cognitive approach to panic. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 24(4), 461-470. Elsevier Science. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22187731>.

Ohio. University System of Ohio Board of Regents. Academic Calendar Conversion. 2010. Web. <<http://www.ohiohighered.org/calendar-conversion>>.

## Appendix A: Email to ACEL Students

From: Krystin Bachman <bachman.45@osu.edu>  
Subject: "Q2S and U" - An Event to Answer All of Your Q2S Switch Questions  
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Greetings Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership Student!

I hope you enjoyed the holiday season with friends and family. My name is Krystin Bachman, a current Ohio State student and member of Agricultural Education Society. Together with the professors in the ACEL Department, I am planning and coordinating an event to help each of you with your transition to semesters.

Mark **"Q2S and U"** on your calendar for **Tuesday, January 17th at 6:00 pm!**  
More details about the event to come in the coming weeks!

***I need your help now, though!*** Please take 5 minutes to complete the survey at the link below. Your answers to the following survey questions will be used to assess student anxieties about the Quarter-to-Semester transition. Faculty members will also use your survey responses to plan the content of their presentations for the event! This is your chance to express your concerns and get your specific Q2S Switch questions answered!!

The survey will be conducted online. Click on the link below. Responses are anonymous.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WLZ8L7Z>

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey! Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions. I look forward to seeing you on January 17th!

Krystin  
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## Appendix B: Survey Responses Categorized by Major

Agricultural Education, Teacher Option - Student Responses	
What concerns do you have about student life when we are on the semester calendar?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Breaks matching up with other semester schools.</li><li>- Class time and workload and being able to have a job also.</li><li>- I do not know for sure which classes I need to take.</li></ul>
What concerns do you have about academics on the semester system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Class offerings for that final semester.</li><li>- How it will affect my graduation status?</li><li>- I'm concerned about the ability for students to be able to schedule 5 or 6 classes in the same semester without having conflicting time slots.</li><li>- Not graduating on time.</li><li>- More classes per semester=more finals to study for</li><li>- Just afraid that some classes that have been taken weren't needed for the new curriculum with classes being condensed. If those classes didn't count then will those grades count in the end?</li><li>- Courses transferring and being able to get all of the credits I need to graduate in a timely manor.</li><li>- How classes will transfer between the two, what will be added or deleted?</li><li>- Will I get all the classes taken that I need/want to take?</li><li>- I am concerned that we will not have enough time to fit in all of the classes that we need.</li></ul>
What specific questions do you have about the Q2S Switch that you would like answered at the Q2S informational event, "Q2S and U"? (Feel free to enter multiple questions.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Will the capstone course be included in student teaching?</li><li>- Will classes be offered this summer since the break is so short? If so, what</li></ul>

classes will be offered.

- How will situations be handled in which a student may be lacking 1 or 2 classes to satisfy degree requirements at the end of their senior year?
- What classes were required during the quarter years that are no longer required and vice versa?
- Will this mess up everyone's schedule as to when they graduate?
- Will all of my current credits switch and will I be set back at all?
- Will our degree take longer to complete since we will take classes on both style?
- Is there anyway we can see what classes will be offered when for semesters at this time?
- Which classes are specifically needed to graduate?



Agricultural Education, Community Leadership Option - Student Responses	
What concerns do you have about student life when we are on the semester calendar?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will extra curricular schedules adjust?</li> <li>- Seeing as how I should just have a few classes to finish I do not anticipate many conflicts with student life.</li> </ul>	
What concerns do you have about academics on the semester system?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can I graduate on time?</li> <li>- Will major requirements change?</li> <li>- Will all my classes still count towards my major?</li> <li>- Can I still add another major/minor?</li> <li>- What classes will I need to take/ not need to take?</li> <li>- Will I be forced to retake classes?</li> <li>- Will I be able to finish on time without having that extra "quarter" or set of classes to get in within the year?</li> </ul>	
What specific questions do you have about the Q2S Switch that you would like answered at the Q2S informational event, "Q2S and U"? (Feel free to enter multiple questions.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will credit hours change?</li> <li>- When will degree audit work?</li> <li>- How exactly will the entire switch work and will it be relatively smooth?</li> </ul>	

Agricultural Communications – Student Responses	
What concerns do you have about student life when we are on the semester calendar?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How student organizations will transition?</li> <li>- Will fees be due as early as this year?</li> <li>- The only concern that I have about student life while on semesters is when will the school year begin and end?</li> </ul>	
What concerns do you have about academics on the semester system?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When I will graduate?</li> <li>- What classes will not be transferable?</li> <li>- What other classes will I need to take?</li> <li>- I am a little stressed about figuring out which classes I will need for Semesters and if it will affect my graduation time.</li> <li>- How will credit hours be converted?</li> <li>- Not getting into classes because they might fill up sooner if they're not offered as often.</li> <li>- I want to ensure I am only required to take the minimum necessary classes in order to graduate in a four-year span.</li> <li>- That because I will have more time, I will put things off and consequently, not be as successful.</li> <li>- I am concerned with credits transferring as we switch to semesters.</li> </ul>	
What specific questions do you have about the Q2S Switch that you would like answered at the Q2S informational event, "Q2S and U"? (Feel free to enter multiple questions.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What flexibility will there be for those of us that are close to graduating on quarters (10 hours or less)?</li> <li>- How the quarter hours will convert to semester hours?</li> <li>- How will credit hours be converted from quarter to semesters?</li> </ul>	

- When will find out which semester some courses will be moved to if they were previously offered for one quarter on the quarter system? (Ex: Ag Comm 510 is only offered during WI Quarter)
- I do not have any at this time; Dr. Rhoades has a done a great job answering my questions!
- I do not have any specific questions. I would just like to hear an overview of the transition.